We claim:

1.   A method of searching a database of data elements, the method comprising:
generating a search query to identify a first set of one or more data elements in the database,
based on the first set, identifying a second set of one or more data elements in the database, where the data elements of the second set are related to one or more of the data elements of the first set, and
generating data based on the data elements of the first and second sets and the relationships therebetween.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein generating a search query includes:
receiving search data from the user,
based on the search data, generating the search query.

3.   The method of claim 2, wherein generating a search query includes:
determining one or more keywords based on the search data, and
generating the search query including the one or more keywords.

4.   The method of claim 3, wherein generating a search query includes:
generating the search query using a grid having first and second axes based on the one or more keywords.

5.   The method of claim 4, further comprising:
coalescing the first set of data elements to include unique data elements.

6.   The method of claim 1, wherein the data elements of the second set are related to one or more of the data elements of the first set based on time.

7.   The method of claim 1, wherein the data elements of the second set are related to one or more of the data elements of the first set based on one or more references.

8.   The method of claim 7, wherein the references are based on the content of one or more of the data elements of the first set and the data elements of the second set.

9.   The method of claim 7, wherein the references include one or more of citations and HTML links.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein identifying a second set of one or more data elements includes:

determining whether one or more of the one or more data elements of the first set include one or more references to one or more other data elements, and

identifying a second set of one or more data elements based on the references.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein identifying a second set of data elements includes:

determining whether one or more data elements in the database include one or more references to the data elements of the first set, and

identifying a second set of one or more data elements based on the references.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing the generated data to one or more of a user and a display.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

graphically displaying the data elements of the first and second sets and the relationships therebetween.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising:

receiving from the user a selection of a data element, and

based on the selection, graphically displaying the contents of the data element.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein the data elements are represented by geometric shapes and wherein the relationships are represented by lines between geometric shapes.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

determining locations at which to display the geometric shapes and the lines to reduce overlaps between geometric shapes and crossings between lines.

17. A method of displaying data, the method comprising:

generating a search query to identify a first set of one or more patent publications in a database,

based on the first set, identifying a second set of one or more patent publications in the database, the patent publications of the second set being cited by one or more of the patent publications of the first set, and

graphically displaying the patent publications of the first and second sets and citation relationships therebetween.

18.   The method of claim 17, wherein the patent publications include one or more of issued patents and published patent applications.

19.   The method of claim 17, wherein the search query includes one or more of an assignee, a class, a filing date, an inventor, an issue date, a subclass, and a title.

20.   The method of claim 17, wherein graphically displaying includes:
        graphically displaying the patent publications of the first and second sets and the citation relationships therebetween in a display including a time axis.

21.   The method of claim 17, further comprising:
        based on the first and second sets, identifying a third set of one or more patent publications in the database, the patent publications of the third set citing one or more of: the patent publications of the first set and the patent publications of the second set, and
        wherein graphically displaying includes:
        graphically displaying the patent publications of the first, second, and third sets and the citation relationships therebetween.

22.   The method of claim 17, wherein the patent publications are represented by geometric shapes and wherein the citation relationships are represented by lines between geometric shapes.

23.   The method of claim 22, further comprising:
        determining locations at which to display the geometric shapes and the lines to reduce overlaps between geometric shapes and crossings between lines.

24.   The method of claim 17, further comprising:
        based on graphically displaying the patent publications of the first and second sets and the citation relationships therebetween, identifying one or more candidate patent publications for one or more of: invalidating prior art, licensing opportunities, and seminal prior art.

25.   The method of claim 24, wherein candidate patent publications for invalidating prior art include patent publications that are not cited by an alleged infringed patent, that cite one or more patent publications cited by the alleged infringed patent, and that are associated with earlier filing dates than the alleged infringed patent.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein candidate patent publications for licensing opportunities include patent publications that are associated with a first assignee and that are cited by one or more patent publications associated with one or more second different assignees.

27. The method of claim 24, wherein candidate patent publications for seminal prior art include patent publications that cite a first number of patent publications and that are cited by a second number of patent publications wherein the second number is greater than the first number.

28. A processor program for searching a database of data elements, the processor program being stored on a processor readable medium and including instructions operable to cause a processor to:

generate a search query to identify a first set of one or more data elements in the database,

based on the first set, identify a second set of one or more data elements in the database, where the data elements of the second set are related to one or more of the data elements of the first set, and

generate data based on the data elements of the first and second sets and the relationships therebetween.

29. The processor program of claim 28, wherein the data elements of the second set are related to one or more of the data elements of the first set based on time.

30. The processor program of claim 28, wherein the data elements of the second set are related to one or more of the data elements of the first set based on one or more references.

31. The processor program of claim 30, wherein the references are based on the content of one or more of the data elements of the first set and the data elements of the second set.

32. The processor program of claim 30, wherein the references include one or more of citations and HTML links.

33. The processor program of claim 28, further comprising instructions to:

provide the generated data to one or more of a user and a display.

34.   The processor program of claim 28, further comprising instructions to:

graphically display the data elements of the first and second sets and the relationships therebetween.

35.   The processor program of claim 34, wherein the data elements are represented by geometric shapes and wherein the relationships are represented by lines between geometric shapes.

36.   The processor program of claim 35, further comprising instructions to:

determine locations at which to display the geometric shapes and the lines to reduce overlaps between geometric shapes and crossings between lines.

37.   A processor program for displaying data, the processor program being stored on a processor readable medium and comprising instructions operable to cause a processor to:

generate a search query to identify a first set of one or more patent publications in a database,

based on the first set, identify a second set of one or more patent publications in the database, the patent publications of the second set being cited by one or more of the patent publications of the first set, and

graphically display the patent publications of the first and second sets and citation relationships therebetween.

38.   The processor program of claim 37, wherein the patent publications include one or more of issued patents and published patent applications.

39.   The processor program of claim 37, further comprising instructions to:

based on the first and second sets, identify a third set of one or more patent publications in the database, the patent publications of the third set citing one or more of: the patent publications of the first set and the patent publications of the second set, and

wherein the instructions to graphically display include instructions to:

graphically display the patent publications of the first, second, and third sets and the citation relationships therebetween.

40.   The processor program of claim 37, wherein the patent publications are represented by geometric shapes and wherein the citation relationships are represented by lines between geometric shapes.

41.   The processor program of claim 40, further comprising instructions to:

determine locations at which to display the geometric shapes and the lines to reduce overlaps between geometric shapes and crossings between lines.